

**1.B.9.b. The Interview**

1. Environment. The formality of the three officer board may cause the applicant some uneasiness or stress. His or her response to that situation is a valuable part of the interview. However, interviewers will be able to get a more accurate view of the applicant's true personality if a "threatening" environment does not exist. Create an environment which will permit the applicant to relax, so he or she will communicate freely.
2. Conversation Flow. Avoid the question and answer approach. Applicants tend to give what they think is the expected answer to a question. Try to conduct the interview as a free-flowing conversation. The member with the most interviewing expertise or experience should direct the interview with a minimum of comments and questions, as appropriate, from the others.
3. Chronology. Follow a predetermined interview plan. A chronological sequence like the one below is recommended, but modify it as necessary to conform to program requirements and the individual applicant. Included in each section are examples of questions that tend to draw the desired response from the applicant. Do not use the list of questions as a script.
  - a. Introduction. Explain the primary purpose of the interview is to develop some knowledge of the applicant's interest and ideas. Briefly explain the intended sequence, so the applicant understands the major portion of the interview will obtain those facts, ideas, qualifications, and experiences not available in the other application materials submitted. Explain you intend to reserve time at the end to answer any questions.
  - b. Personal Life and Home Environment. Review this aspect of the applicant's life, discussing parental guidance and childhood, to provide insight into present and future situations.
    - What are your recreational and leisure-time interests?
    - Do you now belong to any social, civic, or professional clubs and associations?
    - Do you hold office in any of these?
    - If you had more time, in what activities would you like to participate?
    - In general, how would you describe yourself?
    - What do you believe are your outstanding qualities?
    - What do you believe are some of your shortcomings?
    - In which areas would you like to develop yourself?
    - What traits or qualities do you most admire in your immediate supervisor?
    - What has contributed to your career success up to now?

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- What disappointments, setbacks, or failures have you had in your life?
  - What kinds of situations or circumstances make you feel tense or nervous?
  - What were some of the major problems or decisions you have had to make up to now?
  - If you had to do it all over again, what changes would you make in your life and career?
- c. High School. Attempt to determine what the applicant did, and why, during these formative years.
- In what types of extra-curricular activities did you participate?
  - How did you spend your summers while in high school?
  - Did you hold any class or club offices?
- d. College or Other Advanced Study. Try to find out the reasons the applicant chose a certain major, how he or she spent extra time, reasons for good or bad grades, and how college experience has contributed to his or her overall life experience.
- Why did you choose the particular college you attended?
  - What determined your choice of major?
  - How would you describe your academic achievement?
  - How did you decide to become [insert career: an accountant, a sales representative, etc.]?
  - In what types of extra-curricular activities did you participate?
  - How did you spend your summers while in college?
  - Did you hold any class or club offices?
  - Have you had any additional training or education since graduating from college?
  - How do you think college contributed to your development?
- e. Employment. The other portions of the application provide only minimal information about work experience. The interview is the only opportunity to find out why the applicant took a certain job, reasons he or she quit, and attitudes toward the job, employer, and company.
- Can you describe your present responsibilities and duties?
  - What were some things you particularly enjoyed when you worked for [insert employer name]?
  - What did you enjoy less?
  - Looking back at the time spent with [insert employer name], what do you

think you have gained from your association?


- What were your reasons for leaving [insert employer name]?
- How would you describe your [present/past] superior?
- What were some of the problems you encountered on your job and how did you solve them?
- In what way has your present job prepared you for greater responsibilities?
- As you see it, what would be some advantages to you if you joined the Coast Guard?
- What disadvantages might there be?

f. Military Experience. This portion may be the most difficult for some applicants, particularly those who are presently in the Coast Guard or who have extensive prior service because this type of person knows the “system” and it is difficult to distinguish one from another. Interview reports of in-Service applicants tend to summarize applicants’ assignments and experience, be favorable, and lack information valuable in evaluating the individual. What is desired is a look at why they entered and left their Service, why they were able to make rate in such a short time or why it took them so long, why they feel they received their evaluation marks, attitudes about the Service, supervisors, and subordinates, ideas on drug and alcohol problems, racial attitudes, etc., and how past military experience can serve them in the future.

- Can you describe your present responsibilities and duties?
- In the past, for what things have your supervisors complimented you?
- What did you and your superior disagree about?
- How has your present job prepared you for greater responsibilities?

g. Present Situation and Future Ambitions and Goals. What in the applicant’s present situation needs changing and how can he or she accomplish it in this program? Does the applicant have a plan to achieve a certain goal? If so, what are the reasons for his or her objectives, and are they realistic? Do not downgrade an applicant only because he or she is unsure of his or her future goals. Many can contribute a great deal to the Service during one tour of duty. On the other hand, one who claims to desire a Coast Guard career may say so because he or she thinks it is a desired response. Interviewers should not ask, “Do you want to make a career of the Coast Guard?”

- In what way does a job with the Coast Guard meet your career goals and objectives?
- If you joined the Coast Guard, where do you think you could make your best contribution?

- What are your long-term goals and objectives?
  - In considering joining the Coast Guard, what are some of the factors you took into account?
  - What aspects of a job are important to you?
  - What would you want in your next job you are not getting now?
  - Are there any additional aspects of your qualifications we have not covered which would be relevant to the position we are discussing?
4. Pointers. Ask if the applicant has questions or if anything else needs to be added. This is particularly important for civilian applicants to avoid any later misconceptions. Emphasize the Coast Guard's military posture. While maintaining a favorable image, answer questions honestly and avoid any possibility the applicant might believe selection is assured, assignment will be to a desired area or type of work, etc. Remember applicants sometimes hear only what they want to hear and sometimes are unintentionally misled. Don't get trapped into being interviewed by the applicant; make him or her do the talking.
- Don't ask antagonizing questions.
  - Don't ask questions with one-word or -phrase answers.
  - Don't ask questions that have "right" answers.
  - Don't jump to conclusions on the basis of initial impressions or inadequate information.
  - Don't accept a partial response to a question.
  - Don't go off on a tangent. Stay with your intended interview plan.
  - Don't concentrate on shortcomings.
5. Conclusion. After the interview, the board members are to complete an Officer Programs Applicant Assessment form in accordance with the guidance on it;  [Article 1.B.8.](#)